



caBIG Program Update

Welcome

The Cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid (caBIG) program initiated the pilot project Workspaces with a two-day Kickoff meeting on February 19 and 20, 2004 in Washington, DC. More than 160 representatives from 49 NCI-designated Cancer Centers participated in the Workspace sessions to share project information, establish priorities and set strategic directions as we continue moving the caBIG initiative forward.

Our Kickoff meeting began with a half-day session comprised of four plenary presentations. Starting off with a presentation entitled the "End of the Beginning," the presentations reinforced a common vision and understanding of caBIG for the participants. This Kickoff meeting marked a milestone in the quest to become a unified cancer research community as we move beyond our initial phase.

The next day and a half was spent in facilitated Workspace and Working Group breakout sessions. The NCI-designated Cancer Centers, organized into five collaborative Workspaces, were invited to give short presentations based on their roles as Developers or Adopters. These Workspaces include Clinical Trial Management Systems, Integrative Cancer Research, Tissue Banks and Pathology Tools, Vocabularies and Common Data Elements, and Architecture. In addition, three strategic level Working Groups were organized to help address longer-

term issues related to Intellectual Property and Data Sharing, Strategic Planning, and Training. The Workspace breakout sessions provided the seeds for the development of a collaborative environment while presenters informed the group of relevant work underway at their respective institutions, followed by productive discussions. As a result of these discussions, the breakout meetings produced a number of artifacts including draft action plans, inter- and intra- Workspace communication plans, and future agendas. Additionally, participants discovered previously unknown collaborative opportunities while learning about the variety and quality of informatics products in the cancer research community.

The Workspace Action Plans will influence the type and scope of contracts to be negotiated. Contract negotiations are expected to begin in early April 2004, facilitated by the Master Contractor. The Master Contractor will be responsible for caBIG operational oversight including budgets, contracts and scheduling. The Master Contractor contract was awarded during the first week of March.

We were very fortunate to have the NCI Director and Deputy Director as our evening keynote speakers. NCI Director Andrew von Eschenbach, M.D. inspired participants by describing them as members of a unique group whose efforts are critical to the achievement of the NCI challenge to "eliminate suffering and death

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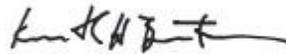
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due to cancer.” NCI Deputy Director Anna Barker, Ph.D. echoed Dr. von Eschenbach’s message and applauded the groups’ pioneering spirit and ambition.

It is very important to maintain our momentum as we move forward. Workspace and Working Group members must remain actively involved and informed of caBIG activities. As promised during the Kickoff meeting, the Kickoff meeting presentations and some of the materials generated at the meetings are now available to the community and can be accessed at <http://cabig.nci.nih.gov/workshopUpdate>. This represents only the beginning of the material generated by the Workspace and Working Group participants, as the collection of materials will continue to grow and be refined with the participation of all the caBIG stakeholders. caBIG Program Updates will continue to be posted to this website, as will other information relevant to the caBIG community.

The vision of a truly unified cancer research community is exhilarating. The reaction and support received from all participants at the caBIG Kickoff meeting were highly encouraging. It is together, and only together, that we can work toward the goal of eliminating death and suffering due to cancer. On behalf of the National Cancer Institute Center for Bioinformatics, I wish to thank all participating Cancer Center staff, NCI Director Dr. Von Eschenbach, Deputy Director Dr. Barker, and the caBIG Project Team for their continued enthusiasm and support for the caBIG initiative.

Sincerely,



Kenneth H. Buetow, Ph.D.

Director

NCI, Center for Bioinformatics